

Start Smart for Your Baby®



👶 A Guide to Your Baby's Care— The First Year



A Guide to Your Baby's Care—The First Year

Congratulations! Your baby is finally here. Having a baby is a special gift. You'll want to take good care of this little one and make sure your baby grows up healthy, strong, and safe.

Whether you just gave birth, adopted an infant, or became a parent to a foster baby, this booklet about your baby's **first year** will help you. You'll gain key facts about how to care for your child—and yourself—as you journey into parenthood. Share this booklet with your family and friends who may be helping you care for your newborn.

The booklet is broken into 3 parts:

- Taking Care of Your Baby
- Taking Care of You
- How to Get Help

Some new moms like to read the booklet from start to finish. Others browse the table of contents and turn to the section they want to learn more about. Keep the booklet in a handy place so you can pull it out over the next year. The charts on pages 5, 6, and 9 will be a good reminder of well-baby visit times and needed shots this first year.

We wish you and your child a happy life—and hope you enjoy reading
A Guide to Your Baby's Care.



For more information on caring for your baby,
visit us at www.startsmartforyourbaby.com.

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your doctor. There may be variations in treatment that your doctor may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

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A Word for Dads

Dads, although this book is focused on mothers, we haven't forgotten you. We know that dads matter just as much in their child's life as moms do.

In the first few months after your baby is born, you may feel a bit left out. Mother and child may be busy with one another. Plus, family and friends often pay lots of attention to moms and babies, and very little to dads.

"I was there for my daughter Tania's birth and even cut the cord. That was pretty amazing. Now she's 3 months old and starting to give her mommy and me smiles. I never thought anyone that small could bring out such a big feeling in me. Now I can't imagine life without my daughter."

What dads can do

You may feel like there is nothing for you to do. But in fact, the only thing dads can't do is breastfeed. You can help care for your baby in all other ways.

Take care of your baby's basic needs

You can:

- Give your baby a bottle of breast milk or formula.
- Burp your baby.
- Change your baby's diaper.
- Wash your baby.

- Dress your baby.
- Keep your baby safe.
- Take your baby to doctor visits.

Help your baby learn

You can:

- Hold your baby.
- Play with your baby.
- Read to your baby.
- Talk and sing to your baby.

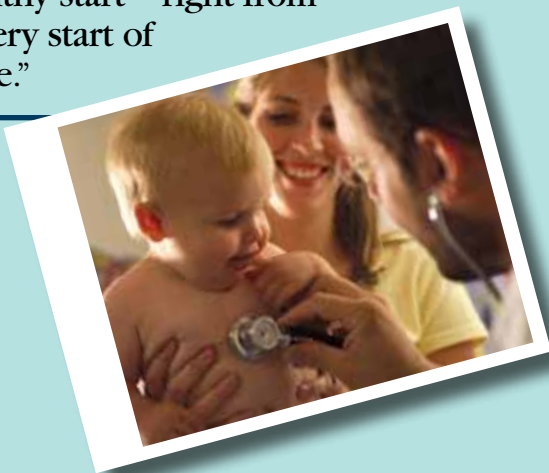
By caring for your baby, you will give the baby's mom a chance to rest and heal after birth. Plus, you will start to build bonds with your child that will last a lifetime.



Part 1: Taking Care of Your Baby

"My husband and I chose to take our baby to a pediatrician instead of going to the family doctor we both use. Pediatricians know a lot about kids' health, and we wanted our child's doctor to be very up on the needs of babies and children.

We picked our baby's doctor when I was pregnant. Quite a few moms-to-be in my childbirth class did too. I wanted Kendrick to have a healthy start—right from the very start of his life."



Choosing your baby's doctor

Choosing your baby's doctor is a key step in helping your baby stay healthy and well. That's why it's important to choose wisely.

Type of doctor

Some parents pick a family doctor for their baby. Some choose a pediatrician—an expert in treating newborns, infants, children, teens, and young adults. Other parents bring their child to a nurse practitioner. The doctor may work alone, with a team of doctors and nurses, or at a clinic.

3 steps in choosing a doctor

Looking for a doctor for your baby?
Take these 3 steps.

Step 1: Find out the facts.

- Ask your doctor, family, friends, and coworkers for names of doctors they like.
- Ask your health plan for the list of doctors it covers.
- Think about where the office is located. Do you need it to be close to your home or a bus route? In the first year, you will need to take your baby to the doctor often for well-child visits. (Your health plan may be able to help you get to the doctor's office.)

Step 2: Call the doctor's office.

- Ask if the office accepts your health plan.
- Find out how long it takes for your sick child to be seen.

Step 3: Set up a meeting to talk with the doctor.

- Write out a list of questions. Talking with the doctor will give you a sense of whether this doctor is a good match for you and your baby.
- After the visit, ask yourself, "Does this doctor listen, answer questions, and seem interested?" Above all, ask yourself, "Do I like and trust this doctor?"

Your baby's first checkup

The doctor or nurse will check your baby in the hospital after birth. Your baby will also need to be seen between 3 and 5 days of age. If your baby leaves the hospital before age 72 hours, this checkup will be done in the doctor's office.

The doctor or nurse will check your baby for jaundice. Jaundice happens when a chemical called bilirubin builds up in a baby's blood. It causes the skin to turn yellowish.

Most newborn babies have mild jaundice. This type is harmless. But in rare cases, the bilirubin level can get very high and might cause brain damage. This type of jaundice needs treatment.

Well-child visits

Your baby should see the doctor often during the first year. At each of these well-child visits, the doctor will check your child to make sure he is healthy and is eating and growing well. Of course, call the doctor or make an appointment any time your child is ill or if you are concerned about your baby's health or development.

Write how to reach your baby's doctor.

Doctor's name: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

After-hours phone number: _____

Office hours:

Monday through Friday: _____

Saturday hours (if available): _____





Well-child visits during your baby's first year

Your child's age	Check here if you went to the visit.	Write the date and time of the visit here.	Write your baby's weight and height here. Write any notes from your visit also.
3 to 5 days after baby was born			
By 1 month			
Age 2 months			

Continues on next page

Your child's age	Check here if you went to the visit.	Write the date and time of the visit here.	Write your baby's weight and height here. Write any notes from your visit also.
Age 4 months			
Age 6 months			
Age 9 months			
Age 12 months— your baby is 1 year old!			

After the first year

Your child should have well-child visits at these ages: 15 months, 18 months, 2 years, and 2½ years. Your child should have a yearly well-child visit from ages 3 years to 21 years.

About vaccines

One of the key things you can do to keep your child healthy is to make sure she gets all the vaccines she needs.

Get your baby vaccinated

"My pediatrician took a lot of time answering my questions about vaccines. She explained that children who don't get their vaccines or are behind schedule for their vaccines have a greater chance of getting sick or even dying. If you have questions about vaccines, make sure to get them answered."

A vaccination may also be called an immunization or a shot.

Why your baby should get her vaccines

Vaccines have helped children stay healthy for more than 50 years. They are safe, and they work. Vaccines protect children from polio, measles, mumps, chicken pox, flu, and other serious illnesses. Kids who don't get needed vaccines have a greater chance of getting these diseases. They can also spread these diseases to other people who are not immune.

Did you know?

Your child will need to get her vaccines before she can start school.

When vaccines happen

Most newborns get their first vaccine (hepatitis B) at birth before leaving the hospital. The rest of the vaccines are given at well-child visits.

Kids get most of their vaccines during the first 2 years of life. That's because the diseases they prevent are most harmful in very young children.

Turn to page 9 in this booklet for an at-a-glance look at when to get vaccines for your child.



Get your vaccines—protect your baby!

Babies are more likely to get sick from germs in the first 6 months of life. Their immune systems have not matured fully. Plus, in the first 2 months they haven't had any vaccines, and during the first 4 to 6 months they have had only a few.

To protect your baby from serious diseases, make sure you are up to date on your own vaccines, such as the Tdap and flu vaccines. If you haven't had all the vaccines you need, or if they have worn off, you could pass diseases to your baby. Talk to your doctor today to find out if you need any vaccines.

Others who may need vaccines

Check with everyone who has close contact with your baby. Make sure they are up to date on their vaccines.

These people may include:

- Baby's dad
- Babysitters
- Child care workers
- Grandparents
- Older brothers and sisters

Keep track of your child's vaccines

Bring this record to each doctor visit to make sure your child is on track for key vaccines.

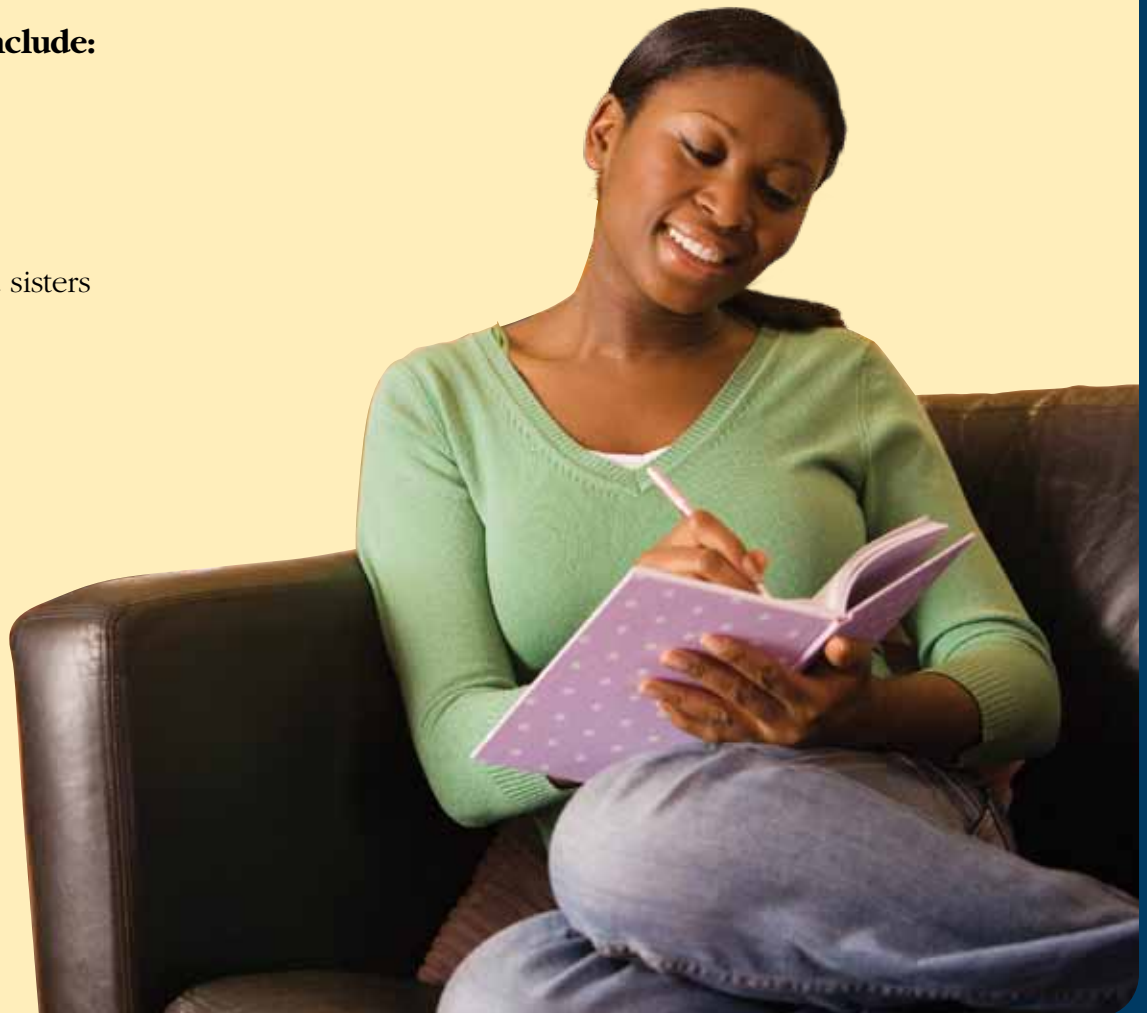
Column 1 shows the vaccine's name and how it protects your child.

Column 2 shows when your child should get the vaccine.

Column 3 gives you a handy place to write when your child got the vaccine.

For the latest facts about vaccines:

- Go to www.aap.org/immunization.





Immunizations your child needs by the age of 2

Vaccine name	Age of child	Date	Notes
Hepatitis B Protects against serious liver diseases	Birth		Depending on the product used, some babies may get doses at birth, 2, 4, and 6 months of age. Check with your doctor.
	1 through 2 months		
	6 through 18 months		
Rotavirus Protects against the most common cause of diarrhea and vomiting in infants and young children	2 months		
	4 months		
	6 months		Depending on the product used, some babies may not need a dose at 6 months of age. Check with your doctor.
DTaP Protects against diphtheria, tetanus (lockjaw), and pertussis (whooping cough)	2 months		
	4 months		
	6 months		
	15 through 18 months		
Hib Protects against Haemophilus influenzae type b (a major cause of spinal meningitis)	2 months		
	4 months		
	6 months		Depending on the product used, some babies may not need a dose at 6 months of age. Check with your doctor
	12 through 15 months		

Continues on next page

Vaccine name	Age of child	Date	Notes
Varicella Protects against chickenpox and its many complications, including flesh-eating strep, staph toxic shock, and encephalitis (an inflammation of the brain)	12 through 15 months		
Inactivated polio (IPV) Protects against crippling polio	2 months		
	4 months		
	6 through 18 months		
MMR Protects against measles, mumps, and rubella (German measles)	12 through 15 months		
Hepatitis A (2 doses) Protects against serious liver diseases	1st dose at 12–23 months 2nd dose at 6–18 months later	 	
Pneumococcal Protects against bacterial meningitis and infections of the blood	2 months		
	4 months		
	6 months		
	12 through 15 months		
Influenza Protects against the flu	6 months through 18 years	 	Recommended for moms and other caregivers too. Given each year. For children younger than 9 years, a second dose is needed 1 month after the first dose when receiving flu vaccine for the first time.

Note: Since this information may change, go to www.healthychildren.org/immunizations for the most current recommendations. Also check with your doctor if you have any questions.

Feeding your little one

Did you know?

By the end of his first year, your baby will have tripled his birth weight. So your little 7-pound newborn will likely be over 20 pounds by age 1! With all that growing to do, your baby needs a healthy diet.

Breast milk or formula?

Before your baby arrives, think about whether you will feed him breast milk or formula. All major health care groups around the world agree—breastfeeding is best for babies and moms.

Breastfeeding helps babies

Breastfeeding:

- Gives babies the best nutrition possible
- Lowers the risk of getting sick from germs, such as flu
- Lowers the risk of overweight and diabetes

Breastfeeding helps moms

Breastfeeding:

- Helps moms lose the weight they gained when they were pregnant
- Lowers the risk of mom getting some types of cancer

If you breastfeed—your questions answered

Q: “I want to give breastfeeding a try. How soon after birth should I start?”

A: You should start breastfeeding as soon as possible after your baby is born. The longer you wait, the harder it is to make breast milk.

Q: “How often should I breastfeed my baby?”

A: Your baby needs to eat often, so try to nurse your baby every 2 to 3 hours for the first few days. This will help you make enough milk. Plus, it will help keep your baby’s bilirubin level down. (See “Your baby’s first checkup” on page 4.)

Q: “I’ve never breastfed before, and I’m having a hard time. Is there anyone who can help me?”

A: Many hospitals have an expert on staff. This expert may be called a lactation consultant. If possible, see the consultant before you leave the hospital. If you’ve already gone home, ask if you can come in for a visit. Or ask a friend or family member who has breastfed for help.

Q: “I’d like to get a breast pump so that Sara can have a bottle of my milk while I’m at work. How can I get one?”

A: Speak to your case manager. She should be able to help you get a breast pump. (See “Your case manager can help” on page 36.)



If you use formula

Some moms decide not to breastfeed. Others can't breastfeed. Some give a mix of breast milk and formula. If you're one of these moms, don't feel guilty. Although breast milk is best, formula is also a healthy choice.

When to start solid foods

Most babies are ready to eat solid foods at 4 to 6 months old. By that age, your baby has most likely stopped pushing food out with his tongue, can hold his head up well, and can sit up. Plus, he needs more calories.

Try to feed your baby solid foods during family meals so that he can see how big people eat. Is your baby too busy watching to eat? Feed him during a quiet time.



Solid foods to give your baby

Here are some good choices:

- Infant cereal
- Vegetables
- Fruit
- Meat
- Eggs
- Fish

You can buy jars of baby food. Or you can make your own by grinding it in a blender or food processor. You can also freeze it in ice cube trays, then put the cubes in freezer bags to store for later use.

Texture matters

Start with pureed foods. Then move on to soft, semi-chunky foods. Don't give your baby anything that requires lots of chewing until he is older. (See "Prevent choking" on page 20.)

Watch for signs of food allergy

Some babies have a food allergy. Food allergies can make people very sick. They can even cause death.

To be on the safe side, give your baby just one new food at a time. Wait at least 3 days before starting another. For most babies, the order in which you start each solid food does not matter. Ask your doctor for advice about order.

After each new food, watch for signs of an allergic reaction.

These signs include:

- Rash
- Trouble breathing
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

If you notice any of the signs listed above:

Stop feeding your baby the new food right away. Call your doctor.

Drinks to give your baby

Your baby should continue to drink breast milk or formula until his first birthday. Although breast milk or formula is the main source of liquid that your baby will drink, it's okay to introduce small amounts of water once your baby begins eating solid food.

Give your baby water if he seems to be thirsty between feedings. During hot months, offer water 2 or more times a day. If your town's water contains fluoride, the water he drinks will help keep his teeth healthy. Plus, it's good to get your child used to the taste of plain water.

When mixing powder formula, it is important that you continue to always mix it as directed and do not dilute it with more water to make it last longer.

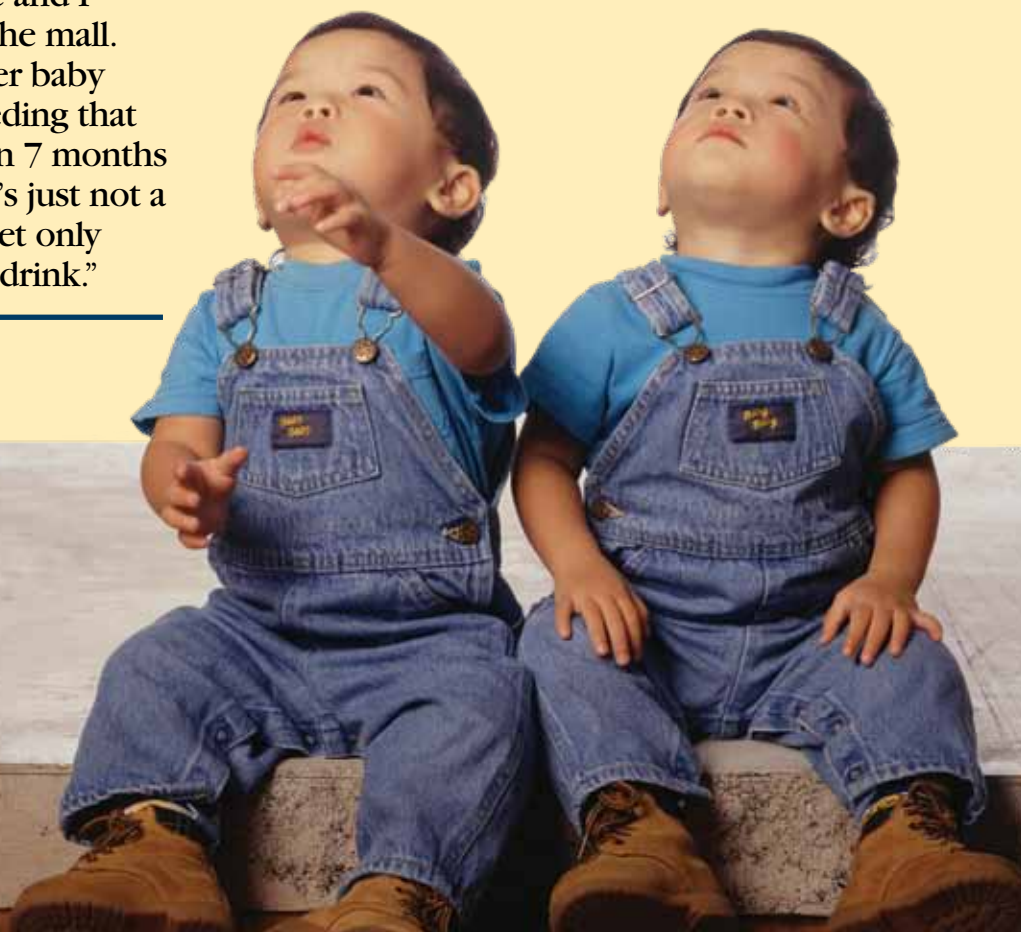
"Yesterday my fiancé and I took our twin babies to the mall. We saw this mom give her baby soda through a straw. Feeding that little baby—no more than 7 months old—sugary drinks? That's just not a healthy idea. Our twins get only water and breast milk to drink."

Limit juice

Babies younger than 12 months don't need juice.

If you do give your child juice:

- **Hold off.** Wait until your baby is at least 6 months old.
- **Limit juice to 4 ounces per day.** Too much juice can cut his hunger for healthier foods and drinks. Plus, it can cause diaper rash, diarrhea, and too much weight gain.
- **Serve juice in a cup—not in a bottle.** Falling asleep while sucking on a bottle of juice causes tooth and gum problems.
- **Serve juice only with a meal or a snack.** Don't serve it on its own.



Caring for your baby's skin

Newborn babies have very sensitive skin. Here's how to take care of it.

Before the umbilical cord falls off—give sponge baths

Your baby's umbilical cord will fall off 1 to 3 weeks after birth. Until then, you should only give sponge baths. Use a soft cloth and warm water, but no soap.

After the umbilical cord falls off—give tub baths

Once the cord falls off, you can use a special baby bathtub. It's OK to use a small amount of baby shampoo, but it's not needed.

Unless your baby gets very dirty, 2 or 3 baths a week should be enough. More baths may dry out her skin. Just be sure to clean her diaper area well during changes.

Keep bath time safe

"My husband gives the baby a bath when he gets home from work. It's their little routine. And now that Regina is 7 months she is really getting into taking baths. Splashing all over! One thing for sure though—he never takes his eyes off our baby when she is in the bath—not even for a second!"



To keep your baby safe in the bath, follow these safety tips.

Before the bath:

- **Make sure the room is warm enough.** This will keep your baby happier.
- **Get all the things you will need for the bath and place them by the tub.** These may include a baby bathtub, a few washcloths, baby shampoo, a cup for rinsing, a bath towel, a clean diaper, and a change of clothes.
- **Lay a towel in the tub.** This will keep your baby from slipping.
- **Put a few inches of water in the tub.** Test the water with your elbow or the inside of your wrist to make sure it's nice and warm. If possible, set your water heater so that the water from the faucet is no more than 120 degrees F. This will prevent a burn if the hot water is turned on by mistake.



During the bath:

- **Stay with your baby at all times.** If you forgot the shampoo or need to answer the phone or door, take your baby with you.
- **Keep a hand on your baby at all times.** Newborns may roll out or slip into the water. Older babies may stand up and fall.
- **Wash your baby with a wet washcloth.** Start with the cleanest areas first. If you use shampoo, be careful to keep it out of her eyes.

- **Rinse your baby by pouring warm water from a cup.** Test the water first. When rinsing her head, cover her eyes with a dry washcloth.

Shield your baby's skin from the sun

The sun's rays can harm your baby's skin. **No** amount of direct sunlight is safe for infants. Even if your baby has darker skin, the sun can cause damage.

So keep your baby in the shade as much as you can for the first 6 months of life. If she must go out in the sun, cover her with a hat and clothing. It's OK to use sunscreen on small areas of her body, such as on her face and the backs of her hands.



Choose skin products wisely

In most cases, your baby does not need any lotions, oils, or powders. If her skin is dry, put a small amount of unscented lotion, cream, or ointment on those areas. If she has a diaper rash, use special diaper rash ointment.

Take care of your baby boy's penis

For the first few months, clean your baby's penis with mild, unscented soap and warm water. Cotton swabs and germ killers are not needed.

If your baby boy was circumcised

The tip of his penis may look raw or yellowish. His penis should be fully healed about 1 week to 10 days after circumcision.

If there is a bandage, replace it at each diaper change to lower the risk of germs. Use petroleum jelly to keep the bandage from sticking.

Sometimes a plastic ring is used instead of a bandage. The ring should fall off within 5 to 8 days.

If your baby boy was not circumcised

Do not pull back the foreskin when you clean his penis. Wait until he's older.

👶 Caring for your baby's teeth and gums

Did you know?

Almost 1 in 4 kids in the United States will have a cavity before age 4! That's why good mouth care is so important—right from the start.

Clean your baby's mouth

After each feeding, gently brush your baby's gums and any baby teeth with water and a soft baby toothbrush. Or wipe them with a clean washcloth.

Get mouth checks

Your child's doctor should check her mouth at well-baby visits. If there are signs of tooth or gum problems, the doctor may want your baby to see a dentist. Your health plan can help you find one.

When your baby gets her first tooth—at about 6 to 8 months old—ask the doctor if she's getting enough fluoride. If your town's water does not have fluoride, you may need to give her some.

Prevent tooth and gum problems

Follow these tips to keep your baby's teeth and gums healthy.

During meals

Your baby:

- Should drink only breast milk or formula (See "Limit juice" on page 13.)

Between meals

Your baby:

- Should drink only water
- Should eat only healthy foods—not sweets

At bedtime and naptime

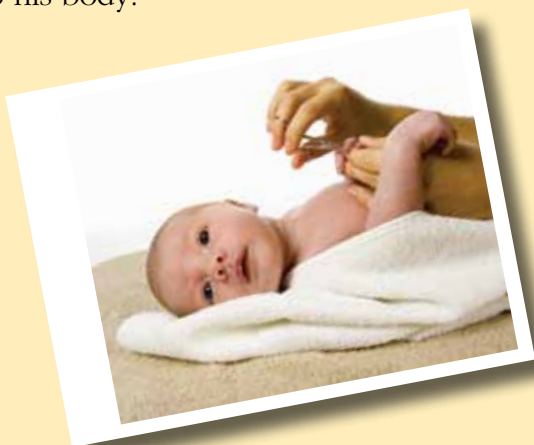
Your baby:

- Should not have a bottle of any liquid in her crib

👶 Caring for your baby's nails

The only care your child's nails need is trimming. Keep his fingernails as short and smooth as you can so he can't scratch himself—or you!

Trim nails after a bath if your baby will lie still, or when he's asleep. Use a soft emery board, baby nail clippers, or blunt baby nail scissors. Do not bite your child's nails, since it could get germs into his body.



👶 When your baby cries

"My baby cries for so many reasons. Sometimes Allie cries because she's hungry. Sometimes she cries because she just wants her mama. And my mom says sometimes she cries because she's just over-tired. I am learning what each of her cries means."

Meet your baby's basic needs

First, take care of your baby's basic needs. Offer her something to eat, check her diaper, burp her.

Comfort your baby

If her basic needs have been met and she's still crying, your baby may simply need comfort. Comforting babies when they cry does not spoil them.

How to comfort a newborn

The best way to comfort a newborn? Make your baby feel like she's back in the womb. Here are some womblike ways to comfort a newborn. Try these ideas and check off the ones that seem to work for your baby.

If my baby needs comfort, I will:

- ☐ Hold her close to my chest.
- ☐ Play some quiet music.
- ☐ Rock her gently.
- ☐ Talk or sing to her softly.
- ☐ Walk around with her.
- ☐ Wrap her snugly in a blanket so that just her head peeks out.



Still feeling stressed? Share your feelings with a friend or family member. Or call your baby's doctor for advice on how to soothe her.

When your baby keeps crying

You've taken care of her basic needs, and you've done your best to comfort her. Yet your baby is still crying. What now?

Is your baby sick or hurt?

First, think about whether your baby could be sick or hurt. Check her for signs. (See "When your baby is sick or hurt" on page 23.)

If your baby is fine, relax

If your baby seems fine, it's OK to put her safely in her crib. (See "Protect your baby from SIDS" on page 18.) After a while, she will either calm down or fall asleep.

Once you know your baby is safe, do something to relax.

You might:

- Lie down.
- Listen to music.
- Read a magazine.
- Watch a TV show.

Write down what helps you relax:

Never shake a baby

It is never OK to shake a baby. Babies cannot fully support their heads. So shaking harms a baby's brain. Shaking is a serious form of child abuse.

Shaking can cause:

- Blindness.
- Hearing loss.
- Mental retardation.
- Speech or learning problems.



"It was so sad that my friend's baby passed away from SIDS. I got all nervous and asked my pediatrician what I could do to lower my baby's chance of SIDS. She said that smoking around the baby is linked to crib death, or SIDS. I make sure no one gets near my baby while they are smoking."

Protect your baby from SIDS

SIDS stands for sudden infant death syndrome. It happens when babies die for an unknown reason. SIDS is the top cause of death in babies younger than 1 year.

Take these steps:

- **Have your baby sleep within arm's reach of your bed.** This will make it easier to watch over and feed him. But do not place your baby in your bed.
- **Keep your baby fairly cool during sleep.** Dress him in light sleep clothing—just one layer more than you are wearing. And keep the room at a temperature that feels good to an adult.
- **Make sure your baby's crib follows safety rules.** (See <http://www.cpsc.gov/> for the latest rules.) Use a firm mattress and a fitted sheet.
- **Place your baby on his back at naptime and at bedtime.** This is the safest position for him to sleep.
- **Give your baby plenty of "tummy time" when he's awake.** Placing your baby on his tummy will help his neck muscles get stronger. Plus, it will prevent flat spots on his head caused by sleeping on his back.

Avoid these things:

- **Don't smoke**—either during pregnancy or after your baby is born. And don't allow others to smoke near your baby.
- **Never put soft things in your baby's crib.** These include pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, and soft toys. These items could cover your baby's face when he moves.
- **Never put your baby to sleep on soft surfaces.** These include chairs, sofas, waterbeds, and cushions. Your baby's head could sink into them.

Do not rely on:

- **Home monitors.** These products have not been found to prevent SIDS. Your doctor will tell you if your baby needs a monitor for breathing or heart problems.
- **Products that claim to prevent SIDS.** None of them have been shown to lower the risk of SIDS. And most have not been tested for safety.

Keep your baby from getting hurt

"My little Mannie is changing so fast, it's hard to keep up with him. My sister's baby rolled off the couch. Luckily she landed on a pillow or that could have been really dangerous."

Did you know?

Each year in the United States, hundreds of kids younger than 1 year die because of injuries.

Your baby is busy learning about her world. She loves to grab, open, and get into things. Your job is to keep her safe as she explores. Here are some ways to help your baby stay safe—in and out of the home.

Use a car safety seat

Your child must ride in a car safety seat **every time** she rides in a car. In order to protect your baby, the seat must be used **the right way**.



The seat must be:

- Facing the back of the car (rear-facing)
- Placed in the back seat
- Put in the right way

Car sense

Never leave a child alone in or around a car—even if the car is off.

Prevent falls

Whether they are rolling, crawling, or walking, babies fall easily. Take these steps.

From birth:

- Never leave your baby alone on a changing table, bed, sofa, or chair. Keep one hand on your baby at all times.
- When you aren't holding your baby, put her in a safe place. This might include a crib or a playpen.

When your baby is learning to crawl:

- Place safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs.
- Put in window guards on all windows higher than the ground floor.

When your baby is learning to walk:

- Do not use a baby walker. Your baby could tip the walker over, fall out of it, or fall downstairs and hurt her head. Plus, a walker could let her go places that are not safe. Anyway, walkers do not help a child learn to walk.

Call the doctor if your baby:

- Acts strangely after a fall
- Has a bad fall
- Keeps crying even after she has been picked up and comforted

Prevent burns

"My baby almost touched a hot pan the other day. I was carrying her and trying to cook at the same time. I'll never do that again!"

Take these steps:

- **Protect your baby from fires.** Put in a working smoke alarm on each floor of your home. Test the alarms one time each month.
- **Protect your baby from hot drinks and food.** Keep them out of reach—at the table and in the kitchen. Never carry your baby and a cup of coffee at the same time.
- **Protect your baby from hot water.** Set your water heater so that the water is no hotter than 120 degrees F. This will prevent a burn if the hot water is turned on by mistake.

If your baby gets burned:

1. Put the burned area in cold water right away. Soak for a few minutes.
2. Cover the burned area loosely with a dry bandage or a clean cloth.
3. Call your baby's doctor.

Prevent choking

Babies love putting things in their mouths. But they don't know what's safe and what's not. Plus, they don't have molars and are still learning how to chew.

Take these steps:

- **Cut your baby's food into thin pieces.** Do not feed her round foods, such as hot dogs and whole grapes.
- **Feed your baby only soft foods.** Do not feed her hard foods, such as peanuts, popcorn, chunks of apple, and raw carrots. These could make her choke.
- **Keep small objects out of your baby's reach.** Small objects that could make your baby choke include balloons, coins, marbles, small balls, and toys with small parts. Sweep or vacuum floors well to pick up tiny bits and pieces.



Learn what to do if your baby chokes

Ask your doctor to teach you what to do. Or learn how to do CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) to get her breathing again.

Keep your baby breathing

Babies love to put things over their heads. If they do this with plastic, it can make them stop breathing (suffocate). So keep plastic wrap and bags away from your child.

Prevent drowning

An infant can drown in just ½ inch of water. So be careful to prevent drowning.

Take these steps:

- **If you live near a swimming pool, make sure it's fenced in.** The fence should be at least 4 feet high. The gate should be self-latching.
- **Keep bathroom doors closed.** This will keep your baby from falling into the bathtub or toilet.
- **Stay within arm's reach of your baby around all water.** Never leave your baby alone near any amount of water—not even for a few seconds.

Keep your baby safe from poisons

"Babies get into everything and put almost everything in their mouth. I was talking to my mother-in-law in the kitchen and baby Kelli was just in the next room. She got into her grandma's purse and had all the medicines out on the floor. Now we put all the purses up and out of her reach!"

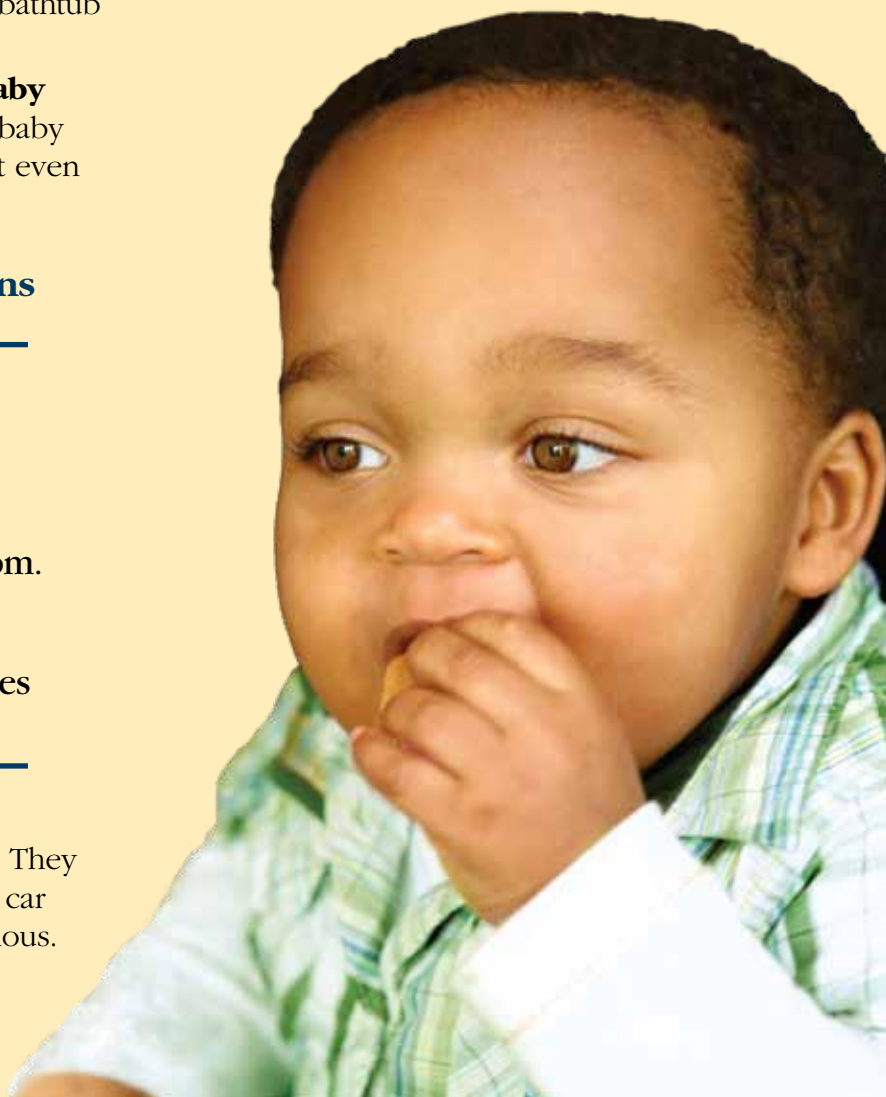
Babies love to put things in their mouths. They don't know that many cleaning products, car fluids, and even medicines can be poisonous.

Take these steps:

- Close safety caps on poisons after each use.
- Do not store drain cleaner (lye) in your home.
- Keep poisons in a locked cabinet—out of your baby's sight and reach.
- Keep poisons in the package they came in.

If your baby may have been poisoned:

- Call the Poison Help Line at 1-800-222-1222 right away. Keep the number by your phone.
- Do not make your baby throw up. This can cause more harm.



Keep your baby safe from guns

Did you know?

Babies in homes where there are guns are in more danger of being shot by themselves, their friends, or their family members than of being hurt by someone who breaks in.

Take these steps:

- Do not keep guns in your home.
- If you choose to keep a gun in your home, store it the right way. Unload it and lock it up. Lock up bullets and shells in a different place.
- Ask if there are guns in the homes your baby visits. Make sure any guns are stored the right way.

Keep your baby safe from secondhand smoke

Smoke isn't just bad for smokers. It's also bad for the people around them—especially babies.

Babies who breathe secondhand smoke are more likely to get stuffy noses, headaches, sore throats, and itchy eyes. They are more likely to cough, have trouble breathing, and have a raspy voice. They are also more likely to die of SIDS. (See “Protect your baby from SIDS” on page 18.)

Take these steps:

- Don't smoke in your home or car.
- Don't let anyone else smoke in your home or car.
- Keep your baby out of places where people smoke.
- Pick babysitters who don't smoke.



Use tools that make your home safer

“Once Kayla started crawling, I had to chase her all day long, just to keep her out of trouble. We covered the outlets with special plastic covers. And we put child safety locks on our lower cabinet doors. They only took a few minutes to install.”

—Nikki

Read about the tools Nikki uses.

- **Cabinet and drawer locks** let me lock away things that could hurt Kayla—like knives and bleach.
- **Doorknob covers** keep Kayla from opening doors I don't want her to open. I put one on the front door and one on the back door.
- **Outlet covers** keep Kayla from putting her finger in a wall socket.
- **Safety gates** are like fences that fit in doorways. I put them at the top and bottom of the stairs. I also use them to block off the kitchen, since it doesn't have a door.
- **Window guards** make sure Kayla won't fall out of a window. I put one in her room, since it's on the second floor.

Keep in mind

No home is truly childproof. You will need to keep an eye on your baby when she is out of her crib or playpen.

When your baby is sick or hurt

"My little Ben fell and hit his head. I don't know how hurt he is. Do I need to take him to the ER?"

Having a sick or hurt baby can be very scary for parents. Keep in mind—there are people with special skills who care and want to help. Here's how to reach them.

Call NurseWise®

Our nurses are here 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to answer your health questions. NurseWise® is free to members of your health plan.

Call us if your baby has any of these symptoms.

Ear, nose, or throat problems

My baby has:

- ☐ A cold that gets worse with fever
- ☐ A cough or cold that lasts more than a few days
- ☐ Ear pain or liquid coming from his ear
- ☐ A very bad sore throat or trouble swallowing

Injuries

My baby has:

- ☐ Trouble walking or moving an arm or leg

Tummy problems

My baby has:

- ☐ Diarrhea that is bloody or does not go away
- ☐ Pain in his belly that is bad or won't stop
- ☐ Thrown up several times and has a fever
- ☐ Vomiting and diarrhea that last for more than a few hours

Other problems

My baby has:

- ☐ Blood in his urine
- ☐ Not had a drink for more than 12 hours
- ☐ Pain that gets worse or lasts more than a few hours
- ☐ Rash and fever
- ☐ Trouble drinking or sleeping

Call us if your baby is younger than 3 months and:

- Has any fever (See "Taking your baby's temperature" on page 25.)
- Skips 2 or more feedings in a row
- Throws up



Call the doctor

We may suggest that you call your baby's doctor. Or you may decide to call on your own. Follow these steps.

Before you call

Have a pen and paper ready to write down what the doctor tells you to do and any questions you have. If the doctor needs to call you back, leave a number where you can be reached.

Be ready to tell the doctor:

- Any health problems your baby has had
- Any medicines your baby is taking
- If your baby has a fever (See "Taking your baby's temperature" on page 25.)
- What vaccines your baby has had
- Your drugstore's phone number

During the call

Stay near your baby. The doctor may have questions about him.

Call for emergency help

Does your baby need help right away? Call 911 or go to the emergency room if he has any of these symptoms.

Injuries

My baby:

- ☐ Got hurt in the head, and he is confused, is throwing up, is pale, or has passed out
- ☐ Has a cut or bump that is large or deep, or is on his head, chest, belly, hands, groin, or face
- ☐ Is bleeding, and the bleeding does not stop when I press a cloth on the wound

Poisoning

My baby:

- ☐ May have had poison

Call the Poison Help Line at 1-800-222-1222.

Other problems

My baby has:

- ☐ Seizures (body jerks)
- ☐ Skin or lips that look blue, purple, or gray
- ☐ A stiff neck
- ☐ Trouble breathing

My baby:

- ☐ Has no energy or can't move all of a sudden
- ☐ Has passed out, or does not respond
- ☐ Is acting strangely, or is getting less alert

Know what to do in an emergency

Take these steps:

- Keep emergency numbers by your phone. You'll find them in your local phonebook.
- Sign up for a first-aid class, if you can. You'll learn what to do if your baby has a bad cut, is choking, or stops breathing.
- Talk to your baby's doctor. Ask what to do and where to go if your baby needs help right away.



Taking your baby's temperature

When your baby has a fever, her body is warmer than normal. It's a sign that her body is fighting germs. A normal temperature in a baby is between 98 degrees F and 99 degrees F. A fever in a baby is anything higher than 100.4 degrees F.

Your questions answered

Q: “What should I do if my baby has a fever?”

A: If your baby is **younger than 3 months**, call your doctor right away or go to the emergency room.

If your baby is **older than 3 months** and is acting normal and eating well, don't worry. The fever is likely harmless and should go away in about 3 days. If the fever lasts longer than 3 days, call your baby's doctor.

The doctor will want to know:

- When you took your baby's temperature
- What the reading was
- What type of thermometer you used

Q: “How should I take my baby's temperature?”

A: If your baby is **younger than 3 months**, you should take a rectal temperature. This gives the most exact reading. The thermometer goes in her rectum—the place where her poop comes out.

Follow these steps to take a rectal temperature:

1. Turn on a digital thermometer.
2. Put a small amount of lubricant, such as petroleum jelly, on the small end of the thermometer.
3. Place your baby across your lap or on a firm surface, either face up or face down. If she's face down, put one hand on her back to hold her steady. If she's face up, hold her legs up with one hand.
4. Slowly put the small end of the thermometer in your baby's rectum. Make sure it goes in **no more than 1 inch**. There may be a guide on the thermometer.
5. Hold the thermometer in place until it beeps. This should take about 1 minute.
6. Take out the thermometer, and read the number. Write down the number, along with the date and time.
7. Wash the thermometer well with soap and cool water.

If your baby is **older than 3 months**, you can take an underarm (axillary) temperature. But a rectal reading is more exact.

Follow these steps to take an underarm temperature:

1. Turn on a digital thermometer.
2. Place the tip of the thermometer in your baby's armpit.
3. Hold her arm down until the thermometer beeps. This should take about 1 minute.
4. Take out the thermometer, and read the number. Write down the number, along with the date and time.
5. Wash the thermometer well with soap and cool water.

Your growing, changing baby

"Timmy just turned 1. When I look back through his pictures, I can't believe how much he's changed. When he was first born, about all he could do was suck, wiggle, cry—and fill his diaper. Now he can say 2 words. He's even taking some steps!"

What's normal?

Most babies do certain things at certain ages. These changes are called milestones.

Look at the changes below. Check off each milestone as your baby reaches it.

By 3 months

My baby:

- ☐ Can hold up his head for a few seconds when held upright
- ☐ Makes sounds other than crying, such as gurgling, cooing, and babbling
- ☐ Responds to my voice

By 6 months

My baby:

- ☐ Plays with his hands by touching them together
- ☐ Reaches for me
- ☐ Rolls over
- ☐ Sees small objects, like crumbs
- ☐ Tries to push up with his hands when he's on his tummy
- ☐ Turns his head toward sounds from another room



By 9 months

My baby:

- ☐ Holds his bottle
- ☐ Sits without help
- ☐ Tries to grab and taste things, such as books and toys

By 12 months

My baby:

- ☐ Copies me, such as talking on the phone and making faces
- ☐ Looks for and finds toys
- ☐ Pulls up to stand
- ☐ Says at least one word besides “ma-ma” or “da-da”
- ☐ Turns his head toward sounds
- ☐ Walks while holding onto furniture

Do you think your baby is missing some milestones?

Your baby could have a hearing, vision, speech, muscle, or learning delay. Tell his doctor right away so he can be tested. If your baby does have a delay, he should get treatment as soon as possible.

Help your baby learn language

Did you know?

Your baby’s brain is changing quickly. He is learning how to understand and how to speak. You can help him by filling his world with lots and lots of words!

Read how these moms help their babies learn language.

“When Dalia was a newborn, we spent a lot of time just gazing into each other’s eyes. I would talk, and she would take it all in.”

“Gary loves when I sing to him. He really likes those silly songs for kids. I don’t have the greatest voice, but he doesn’t seem to mind!”

“I talk to Sierra all day long. When I take her out in the stroller, I point out trees, cars, street signs. When I’m cooking dinner, I tell her everything I’m doing.”

“Maggie is crazy about nursery rhymes. She likes to hear the same ones again and again and again!”

“Baby Ricardo loves when I read to him. He’ll point to a picture, and I’ll say what’s in it. He wants to know the names of things. Board books are great because he can’t tear them!”

Hold off on TV

In order to learn language, your baby needs to interact with real—not pretend—people. So don’t let him watch TV until he’s at least 2 years old.

If your baby needs extra help

Does your baby have a health problem or a learning problem? She has special needs. That means she needs more help than babies who don't have these problems.

At the hospital

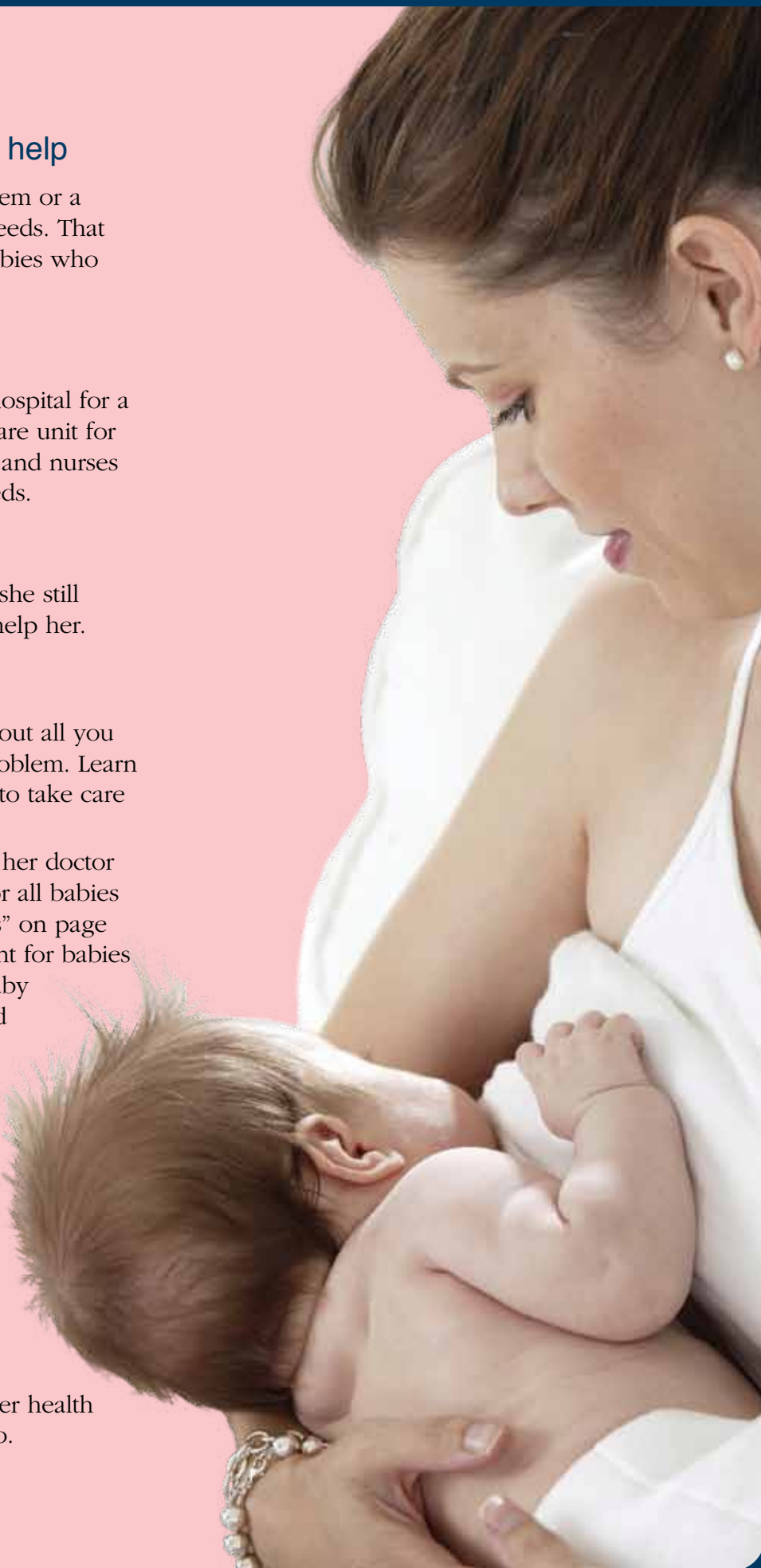
Your baby may need to stay at the hospital for a while after birth. She will stay in a care unit for newborns. There, a team of doctors and nurses will give your baby the care she needs.

What you can do

Even if your baby is at the hospital, she still needs you. Here are some ways to help her.

Take these steps:

- **Ask questions and read.** Find out all you can about your baby's health problem. Learn what you'll need to do in order to take care of her at home.
- **Give your baby breast milk** if her doctor says it's OK. It's the best food for all babies (see "Breastfeeding helps babies" on page 11). And it's even more important for babies with health problems. If your baby can't nurse, pump your milk and store it at the hospital for your baby to drink.
- **Keep an eye on your baby.** If you notice any changes, tell her health care team right away.
- **Spend time with your baby.** Talk with her. Touch, hold, and snuggle your baby if her doctor says it's OK. Doing these things can lower her stress and help her grow.
- **Take care of your baby.** Ask her health care team what tasks you can do.



Find ways to cope

"My little Sammy has Down syndrome. He's my whole world, but taking care of him is a huge job and I'm a single parent. Over time, I've found some ways to cope—with the help of my family."

Try these tips:

- **Ask family members and friends for help.** They can do tasks like cook, clean, and shop. They can also take care of your baby to give you a break.
- **Share your feelings.** Talk to a friend, a counselor, a support group, or an online group.
- **Take care of your body and mind.** Eat well and be active. Do things that help you relax—read, watch TV, listen to music, lie down.

- **Talk to your baby's doctor.** Write down your questions and the doctor's answers.
- **Talk to your case manager.** (See "Your case manager can help" on page 36.)

If your baby was born early

"Normal" for your baby will be a little different. Her milestones will fall later than those of babies who spent a full 9 months in the womb. (See "What's normal?" on page 26.)

Let's say your baby was born 2 months early. It makes sense to compare her to babies who are 2 months younger than her. This is called her adjusted age.

The key thing is for your baby to keep growing and changing at a steady rate. Her doctor will help you track how your baby is doing.



👶 Part 2: Taking Care of You

"During that first month, my son was hungry all the time. Just feeding him and changing his diaper took all my energy. Thank goodness my mom was able to stay with us for a week. She did things like shop, cook, and clean—so I could rest."



*"It's true—*having a baby takes a lot out of you. My friends were always dropping by to see her. My boyfriend was real good about telling my friends that I needed time to rest. That was helpful."

"Becoming a mom changed my life—mostly for the better. The things that used to matter to me—they're not so important anymore. Keeping my little girl safe and happy—that's what I care about now."

👶 After your baby is born—your postpartum visit

It's very important that you see the doctor 3 to 8 weeks after your baby is born. At this postpartum visit, your doctor will make sure your body is healing well and that you have no health problems. Be sure to schedule this visit while it's still covered by your health plan.

Your questions answered

Q: "Why did my doctor check me for STIs?"

A: If you are sexually active, you should get screened for STIs at least one time each year. Here's why.

STI stands for sexually transmitted infection. You can get it by having sex. STIs can make you very sick. They may make you unable to have more children. If left untreated, some of them can even cause death.

If you learn that you have an STI, you can take steps to treat it. Plus, you can use a latex condom to keep from spreading it.

Q: “My doctor asked if I want the HPV vaccine. What is it?”

A: Genital HPV (human papillomavirus) is an STI. It can cause genital warts and some types of cancer. The HPV vaccine protects girls and women from the most harmful types of HPV.

The vaccine is safe. It comes in 3 doses that you get over 6 months.

You should get the vaccine if you are between 11 and 26 years old and are not pregnant. This is true even if you have been sexually active or have already had HPV.

If you are age 18 or younger, you may be able to get the vaccine for free. The government’s Vaccines for Children program may pay for it.

All women age 21–29 should get a Pap smear every 1–2 years. Women 30 and older can be tested every 3 years if their previous tests have been negative. In a Pap smear, your doctor takes a swab of cells from your cervix. The sample is sent to a lab to check for problems that could lead to cancer.

If you do have problems with your cervix, you can get treatment. Cervical cancer can often be cured if caught in the early stages.

Q: “I’m not ready to get pregnant again. What are my options?”

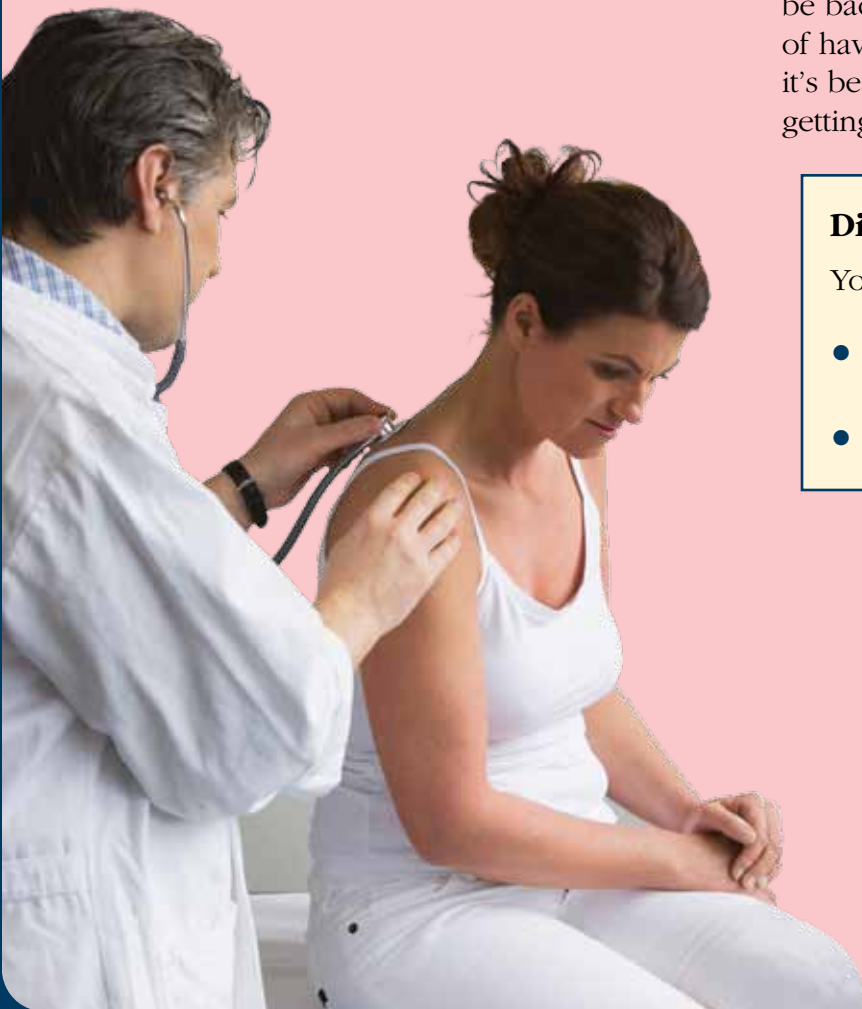
A: Your postpartum visit is a great time to talk with your doctor about birth control methods. There are many choices (see next section).

Getting pregnant too soon after giving birth can be bad for your health. Plus, it can raise your risk of having a baby who has health problems. So it’s best to wait 18 months to 2 years before getting pregnant again.

Did you know?

You can get pregnant:

- Before you get your first period after delivery
- While breastfeeding



Birth control methods

If you are planning to have sex and do not want to get pregnant, you should choose a form of birth control. Here are some of the most common forms of family planning.

Birth control patch

The birth control patch contains hormones. It is worn on the shoulder, stomach, or buttocks. You replace it once a week.

Birth control pills

The pills contain a mix of hormones. They work very well when used the right way.

Condom

A condom is a latex shield that blocks sperm. To be sure you will not get pregnant, it's best to use a backup form of birth control, such as foam that kills sperm. Condoms can also prevent the spread of STIs.

Implant under the skin

This implant is a small rod that your doctor places under the skin of your arm. It works for 3 years.



IUD

IUD stands for intrauterine device—a small, T-shaped piece of plastic that your doctor slides up into your womb. It may be a good choice if you don't plan to have a child again for several years.



Mini-pill

This type of pill contains only one type of hormone—progesterone. It may be a good choice if you are breastfeeding.

Progesterone shot

This shot contains the hormone progesterone. You get it once every 3 months. It is popular with women who forget to take birth control pills.

Vaginal ring

This is a flexible plastic ring that sits in your vagina. It contains a smaller amount of hormone than birth control pills or the progesterone shot. You leave the ring in place for 3 or 4 weeks, then remove it.

🍴 Eat right!

"Now that I'm a mom, I'm finally eating my vegetables! I know Josie watches everything I do, and I want to set a good example."

Eating right helps your body heal after childbirth. It helps you get back to a healthy weight. Plus, it gives you the strength and energy you need to take care of your baby.

Choose plenty of whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and low-fat dairy products. Limit sweets and fried foods.



If you are breastfeeding:

- Keep taking prenatal vitamins.
- Or take a multivitamin with iron, calcium, vitamin B12, and vitamin D.

If you think you might get pregnant in the next year or two:

- Keep taking prenatal vitamins.
- Or take a multivitamin with folate.

🧘 Take care of your feelings

Childbirth brings big changes in your hormones—and your life. These changes can affect the way you feel.

Baby blues

"After Akira was born, I felt really down. I cried a lot for no real reason. It took about a week to start feeling better."

Many women feel sad after delivery. This is called baby blues, or postpartum blues. Most of them feel better soon.

If you get the baby blues:

- Get as much rest as you can.
- Let family members and friends help. (See "Family and friends can help" on page 37.)
- Talk with other new moms.

When the blues lasts—postpartum depression

"I kind of fell apart after Tyler was born. All I wanted to do was sleep and watch TV. I felt so hopeless, like I would never feel good again. It got so bad that I couldn't even take care of my son."

Some women feel very sad after delivery, and the feeling does not go away. This is a serious health problem called postpartum depression.

Signs of postpartum depression

Check off any signs you have.

Since my baby was born, I:

- ☐ Can't take care of myself or my baby
- ☐ Don't eat the way I used to
- ☐ Feel guilty
- ☐ Feel very sad or depressed

Since my baby was born, I have:

- ☐ Less energy
- ☐ Less fun doing things I used to enjoy
- ☐ Thought about harming myself or others
- ☐ Trouble sleeping—even when my baby is asleep or being cared for by others
- ☐ Trouble staying focused

Do you have any of these signs?

If you have any of the signs of postpartum depression, tell a family member or friend right away. It's time to get help.

Getting help for postpartum depression

Read how these women eased their postpartum depression.

"My mom stepped in and made me see the doctor. Now I'm taking medicine for the depression. I'm slowly getting back to normal."

"I decided to try talking to a counselor. It really helps to share my feelings. It's like a weight has been lifted off my chest."

"My husband is pitching in around the house and taking care of our daughter more. Now I'm getting out of the house again—taking walks, doing things with friends. I feel more like myself."



Sleep when you can

You need plenty of rest after childbirth to get your strength and energy back. But it may be hard to get a full night's sleep. That's because while newborns usually sleep 16 or 17 hours a day, they may sleep for only a few hours at a time.

Keep in mind that this sleeping pattern won't last forever. In time, your baby will learn to sleep through the night.

Tips for getting more sleep

Read how these moms fit in more sleep.

"My case manager told me to sleep when the baby sleeps. She was so right. I'll doze on and off all day long—just like little Keandre. So even though I'm up with him half the night, at least I can catch up on sleep during the day."

"My boyfriend and I take turns getting up with Ellie at night. That way, each of us can get a decent night's sleep. I leave a bottle of breast milk in the fridge for him so he can feed her."



Part 3: How to Get Help

Caring for a newborn baby is a big job. But you don't have to do it alone. Here are some ways to get help.

Your case manager can help

Your case manager is likely a nurse or a social worker who works with your health plan. She can't prescribe medicines or give you hands-on health care. But she can help you in many ways.

A case manager can help you:

- Feel more relaxed and in control.
- Find answers to your health questions.
- Get support from your health plan and the place you live.
- Get the facts you need to make choices about your baby's health care.
- Keep your baby's health care team aware of any health problems.
- Know what benefits your health plan offers.

To reach your case manager:

Call your health plan.

WIC can help

WIC is short for the Women, Infants, and Children program. This government program pays for healthy foods for mothers and children.

Which foods does WIC pay for?

WIC covers many healthy foods, including:

- Cheese
- Eggs
- Fruits and vegetables
- Infant formula and cereal
- Milk
- Peanut butter

Who can get WIC?

WIC covers:

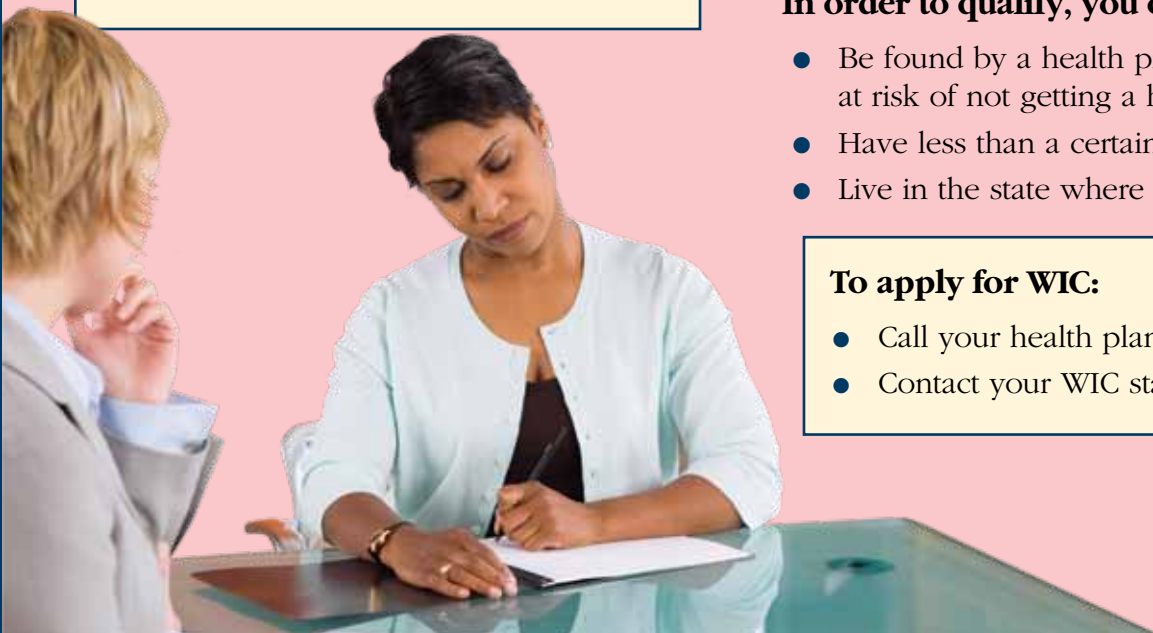
- Children—up to age 5
- Pregnant women—up to 6 weeks after pregnancy ends
- Breastfeeding women—up to baby's first birthday

In order to qualify, you or your child must:

- Be found by a health provider to be at risk of not getting a healthy diet
- Have less than a certain income
- Live in the state where you are applying

To apply for WIC:

- Call your health plan.
- Contact your WIC state agency.



Family and friends can help

Sometimes it is hard to ask for help. But the only way to let people know you need their support is to ask for it. Here are some ways they can pitch in.

Check off some ways that people in your life could help you out.

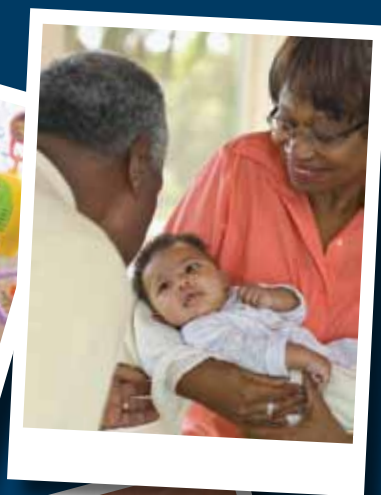
I would like a friend or family member to:

- ☐ Do chores around the house (cooking, cleaning).
- ☐ Drive me to places I need to go (the doctor's office, the grocery store).
- ☐ Help me fill out forms for WIC, Medicaid, or other services.
- ☐ Lend me baby clothes and supplies (crib, stroller, high chair), if they're safe.
- ☐ Listen to me when I have things on my mind.
- ☐ Watch my baby so I can do other things (rest, get chores done, run errands).

List any other ways family and friends could help. _____

Keep in mind:

Lots of people would be happy to help out a new mom. But they just don't know what to do.



A Strong Start in Life

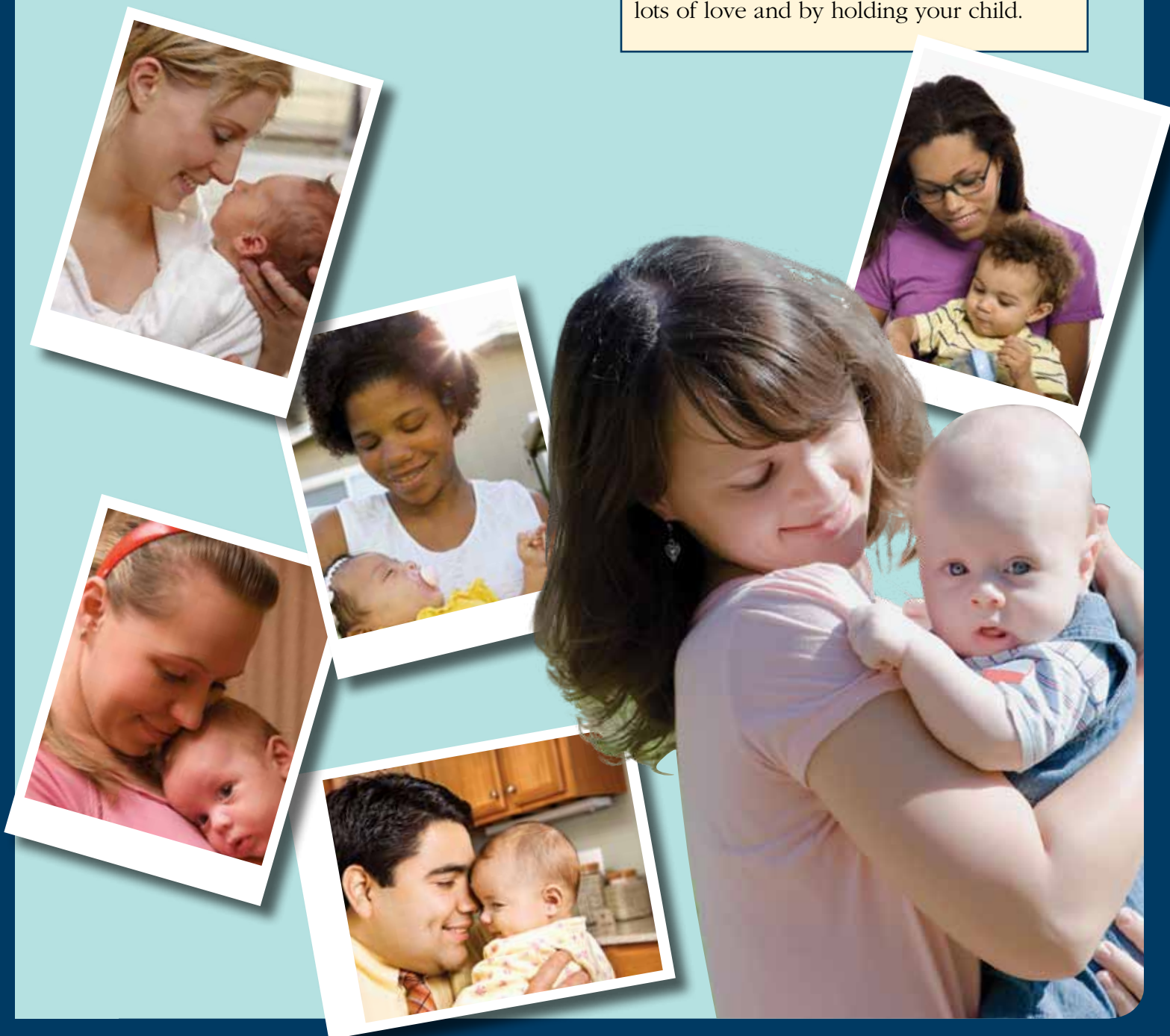
Your little newborn has a lot of growing and changing to do. By his first birthday, your child will likely be taking his first steps and saying his first words.

Your baby needs a lot of love and care. It's a good thing he has you—to feed him, change him, hold him, guide him.

Being a parent is a huge job. It's also a gift. Thank you for all you do each day to give your child a strong start in life.

Hold your child

Babies need to be held and touched often. You will never spoil your baby by showing lots of love and by holding your child.



Emergency Contacts

Keep the following phone numbers available (for yourself and caregivers):

Poison Help Line:
1-800-222-1222

Family or friend's phone:

My child's doctor:

Baby's mom's work and cell phone:

Baby's dad's work and cell phone:



Centene's Start Smart for Your Baby Physician Team

Mary Mason, MD, MBA, is senior vice president and chief medical officer for Centene Corporation and leads the Start Smart for Your Baby team for Centene. Prior to coming to Centene, Dr Mason served as medical director and associate medical director for 2 leading managed care organizations. She has practiced internal medicine since 1999 and is currently board certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine and a fellow of the American College of Physicians.

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Tanya Remer Altmann, MD, is a practicing pediatrician in Southern California and clinical instructor with Mattel Children's Hospital at University of California, Los Angeles. She is a leading medical authority for the popular press and entertainment industry, and a best-selling author, parenting expert, and media spokesperson on behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Dr Altmann has served on the board of the National Association of Medical Communicators and is currently on the executive committee of the AAP Council on Communications and Media.

Plain Language Approach

This booklet uses plain language techniques so people can read this important information and will want to read it.

Health Literacy Division of Language Solutions, Inc. with Jann Keenan, EdS and Julia Wittner, MA as lead health literacy writers.





The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and its member pediatricians dedicate their efforts and resources to the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults. The AAP has approximately 60,000 members in the United States, Canada, Mexico, and many other countries. Members include pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists. One major AAP activity is to further members' professional education. In its public education efforts, the AAP produces patient education brochures and a series of child care books written by AAP members. The content for this booklet was gathered from these consumer resources and developed in conjunction with Centene Corporation. For more information on child health and safety, visit the AAP Web site for parents: HealthyChildren.org.



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